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MARCH 18, 1987

A Cahners publication serving the total foodservice industry

RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS

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MARCH 18, 1987

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R&I REPORT

LEGISLATION PROPOSED FOR NEW MINIMUM WAGE

H.R. 79 Introduced by Representative Mario Biaggi (D-N.Y.): Would increase the minimum wage in five annual steps, beginning with a 50-cent increase in July 1987. By 1991, minimum would be equal to half the average hourly wage for private nonsupervisory workers.

H.R. 649 Sponsored by Henry Gonzalez (D-Tex.): Would raise the minimum by 5% each year until it reached a level equal to half the average hourly earnings of nonsupervisory workers on private nonagricultural payrolls. After that level had been reached, proportionate increases in the minimum would coincide with increases in that average.

H.R. 659 Introduced by Rep. Gerald Kleczka (D-Wis.) and 17 co-sponsors: Calls for two increases of 50 cents each in 1988 and 1989

■ **WASHINGTON UPDATE**

Minimum-Wage Battle Renewed

After 10 years, Congress re-addresses the issue with three different bills.

Despite all the talk of a healthier economy and lower unemployment during the first six years of the Reagan Administration, there has been no change in the federal minimum wage.

Although bills proposing an increase failed in the 99th Congress, with the new Democratic majority, organized labor and other supporters of a raise are more hopeful this time around.

The many proponents of an increase in the minimum wage argue that the cost of living has risen by almost 20% since the minimum wage was raised to $3.35 an hour in 1981. That wage amounts to less than $7,000 annually, below the level of welfare and food-stamp payments that a family of three would be entitled to in New York City.

During the first weeks of this Congress, three different minimum wage bills were introduced in the House and there may be more to come. In the Senate, similar action can be expected. Sen. Edward Kennedy (D-Mass.), chairman of the Senate Labor and Human Resources Committee and considered a friend of organized labor, has indicated that the minimum wage would be one of the major items on his agenda.

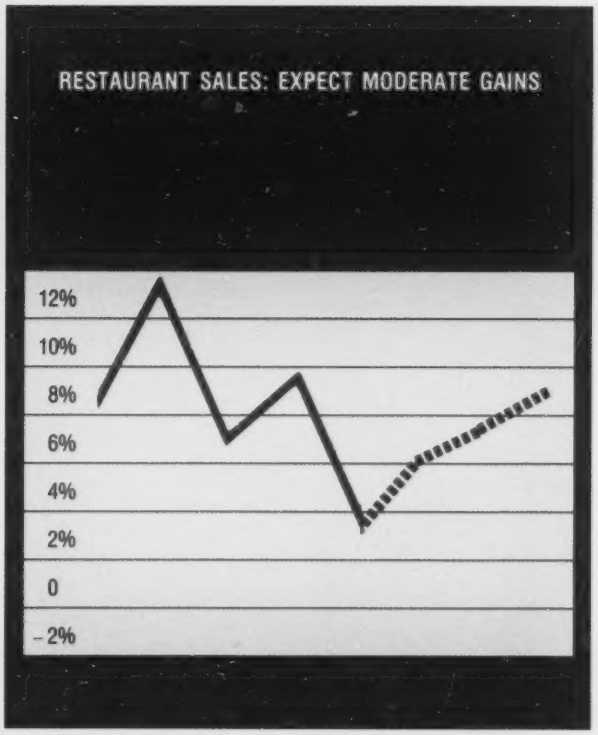
Kennedy

On the downside, some economists believe steadily increasing wages are a major cause of inflation. When wages rise, with no concurrent increase in production, operating costs increase. This, in turn, may mean a company chooses not to hire additional workers or to lay off some existing employees.

In the foodservice industry, many employers already are paying considerably more than the minimum wage to attract workers, but are still opposed to a mandated increase. According to the National Restaurant Association, such legislation would be inflationary because an increase in the minimum raises the floor for all wages, as other workers seek to maintain their differential.

Some restaurant industry executives also have voiced opposition based on the possibility of increased unemployment. The greater operating cost caused by a rise in the minimum wage forces an increase in prices. The company then loses some of its customer base who can not afford the increase, which in turn leads to laying off of workers, thereby further shrinking the customer base.

—R.K.



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Western Steer Boosts Sales by Adding All-American Food Bar

The possibilities are almost endless.

"You can probably make 500 different combinations" at Western Steer Family Steakhouse's new All-American Food Bar, says Harold Miller, marketing director of the 190-unit chain.

With the food bar concept growing increasingly popular in family-style restaurants, Western Steer's version comes in three sizes, ranging in length from 16 to 22 feet. There are 65 food offerings, from salads, fruits and cheese to hot vegetables, desserts, hot breads and freshly prepared meats.

While some older units have only installed the "concept" of the All-American Food Bar because of space limitations, all newly constructed Western Steer units will accommodate the food bar. It is backed by an All-American Family Meal promotion from the Claremont, N.C.-based chain.

For $3.99, customers can eat as much as they want and make as many trips to the food bar as they desire. The impact of the offering has been a 25% sales gain and increased customer counts. Through the fall, the food bar had been installed in all 39 company-owned units and 80% of the rest of the firm's 150 franchised stores.

"This addition to our existing salad and hot vegetable bar structure will provide a full selection for Western Steers' customers who prefer to design their own meal and . . . who prefer paying one all-you-can-eat price," says Marshall Digh, president of parent Western Steer Mom 'n' Pop's Inc. "The new bar also provides for future expansion of menu items compatible with our current menu mix. The name 'All-American' is expressive of our marketing thrust."

Western Steer has more than 200 units, including specialty restaurants.

S&A Gets Into the Hotel Side of the Business

S&A Restaurant Corp., with more than 400 theme restaurants and $500 million in systemwide sales, is now entering the hotel marketplace.

The Dallas-based operators of Steak & Ale and Bennigan's has established a new division—Innovative Foodservices—to manage foodservice at the Embassy Suites Hotels at Country Club Plaza in Kansas City, Mo., and the Camelback Embassy Suites in Phoenix.

S&A is slated to run all foodservice at both locations, from restaurants and bars to catering, room service and deli and carryout operations, where available. In Phoenix, S&A will manage the existing Ellington's restaurant while in Kansas City the company will open Steak & Ale's Plaza Grill.

"As prime real estate sites diminish, our management contracts may lead to site extensions for existing concepts such as Steak & Ale and Bennigan's," says Gary Link, S&A's vice president of new business development.

The All-American Food Bar is boosting the bottom line at Western Steer.

"We see this as a great new growth vehicle for the company," says Lane Cardwell, senior vice president at S&A. "We're especially fortunate to be working with the largest and fastest-growing all-suite operator in the country."

At Steak & Ale's Plaza Grill in Kansas City, Mo., the food offerings will range from grilled meats, seafood and prime rib to pastas, appetizers, sandwiches, soups and salads.

—Howard Schlossberg
—Brad Stratton

R&I DATA

AVERAGE MENU PRICES: MIXED RESULTS NOTED

R&I tracks average selling prices for a variety of menu items at restaurants across the country. While beverage prices remained within a few cents of the previous month's survey, sandwich prices showed a noticeable increase, especially in the West.

Item	Full service	Fast food	Hotel/ motel	North-east	South	North Central	West
Beverages:							
Coffee	$.67	$.46	$.85	$.72	$.72	$.57	$.68
Iced tea	.70	.68	.87	.75	.78	.65	.81
Soft drinks	.76	.69	.86	.76	.76	.71	.84
Beer	1.51	1.71	1.69	1.65	1.71	1.38	1.74
Wine (glass)	1.93	1.69	2.27	2.26	2.07	1.83	2.15
Sandwiches:							
Hamburger	3.16	1.78	3.22	2.98	2.63	2.20	3.62
Cheeseburger	3.37	1.89	3.26	3.15	2.54	2.38	3.77
Ham & cheese	2.98	2.37	3.06	3.37	2.32	2.10	3.36
Club	4.41	3.10	4.46	4.44	4.05	3.58	4.84
Fish	2.98	1.89	3.78	2.87	3.52	1.65	2.78
Chicken patty	3.58	1.68	3.58	2.38	3.29	2.09	4.57
Other:							
Chili	1.73	1.58	1.97	1.82	1.62	1.41	2.24
French fries	1.09	.88	1.01	1.28	.93	.90	1.01
Scrambled eggs	1.24	1.38	2.34	2.13	1.79	1.34	1.64

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■ INSTITUTIONS SURVEY

The Results Are In . . .

Members of *R&I*'s institutional readership reveal insight into the world of profit-making ventures.

It's hard to keep a good idea down. At least that's what respondents to *R&I*'s Institutions Survey seem to say. Despite cutbacks and other adverse financial conditions, institutional operators still manage to come up with new ways to make ends meet.

In November 1986, several of these operators answered the question, "How did you finance your operation's revenue-generating ventures?" Solutions ranged from fund-raising events to loans to creative budgeting; the most popular source for funds was the institutions' own foodservice budget.

Sixty percent of respondents launched their respective ventures for less than $10,000. In fact, many operators have turned a profit even when starting with next to nothing.

Dale Henson, director of food and nutrition services for Mounds View Public Schools, St. Paul, says he began his catering, contracting and consulting activities without raising any money outside of what already was budgeted to him.

"We already had the equipment and the transportation vehicles—all we needed was packaging material," he says. "That cost around $1,000 or $1,500." Sales from Henson's catering and his contracting operation, which supplies meals to senior citizens and neighboring private schools, totalled more than $100,000 last year.

Timothy Kavulla, director of foodservice for the Wichita Public Schools, Wichita, Kan., also started his contracting and catering operations from cash allotted to him in his school-district budget. Last year these two activities accounted for 12% of Kavulla's $7.5 million in food sales.

Henson and Kavulla found their fortunes in catering, and so did a lot of other survey respondents. Seven out of every 10 operators surveyed have begun some type of catering operation, whether it's food for parties or meals for senior-citizen groups.

Retail foods, usually in the form of bakery goods, proved to be another popular revenue-generating venture; a full 40% of survey respondents have started some type of retail operation within the last two years.

With registered dietitians in close proximity, hospital foodservice directors have found weight-loss programs to be logical adjuncts to their departments. A large number of directors report operating functions of this type, often in addition to other ventures.

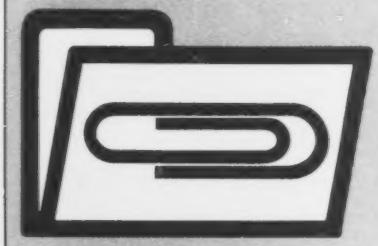
At the Baptist Medical Center of Oklahoma Inc., Foodservice Director Dan O'Connell oversees two types of weight-management programs, plus catering, consulting, and retail and wholesale bakery operations. His programs are highlighted in "Intrapreneurship: A Case Study."

Survey respondents also named cooking classes and nutrition counseling as ventures that take advantage of their institutions' existing resources. At the Jones-Harrison Home, a long-term care facility in Minneapolis, Foodservice Director Ronald Mattson opened his staff training sessions, conducted by a professional chef, to the public. The $2,000 in course fees he collected paid for two-thirds of the hired chef's salary; Mattson thereby trained his kitchen staff for one-third the price.

Other successful revenue-generating ventures among institutional operators include public restaurants and miscellaneous fund-raising events such as balloon sales. Although the percentage of respondents participating in these activities currently is small (3% and 7% respectively), several operators wrote of plans to start similar ventures in the future.

The red-hot byword among institutional operators today seems to be "Try it—you'll like it." Whether "it" is a catering operation, a bakeshop or something else depends on the individual institution. But chances are, "it" will produce enough money to keep foodservice budgets in the black.

—Pam Erickson



INTRAPRENEURSHIP: A CASE STUDY

Name: Dan O'Connell
Title: Director of Foodservice
Operation: Baptist Medical Center of Oklahoma Inc., a Division of Oklahoma Healthcare Corp., Oklahoma City, Okla.

Dan O'Connell was one of the first hospital foodservice directors to catch the intrapreneurial wave. Now, with catering sales of $120,000 and retail and wholesale bakery sales of $135,000, O'Connell is riding high, with no intentions of stopping.

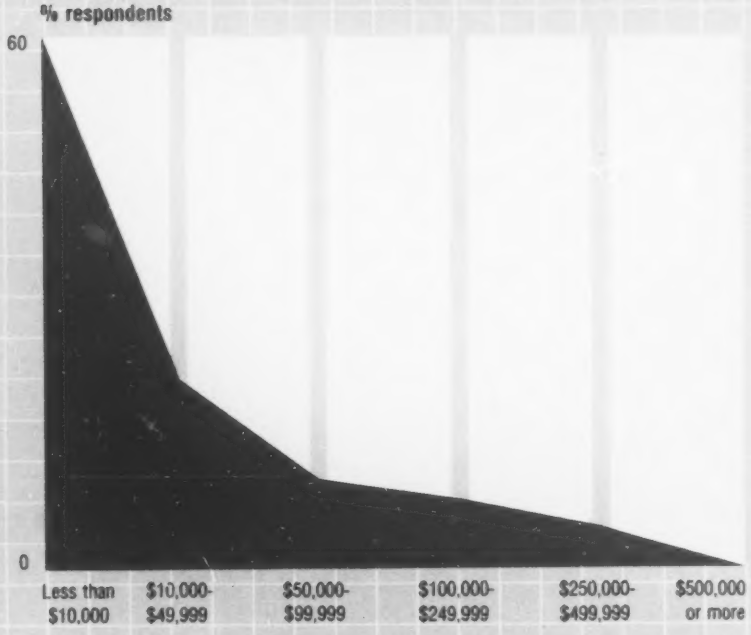
Last year his department's in-patient nutritional assessments, which go above and beyond standard dietetic services, generated $120,000. O'Connell and his staff also have developed a trademarked weight-management program, "Changing Your Weighs," and recently initiated a gastric-bubble weight reduction program in conjunction with the hospital's gastroenterology department. Retail food baskets and Royal Touch room service also have helped increase his department's marketability.

"Of course, our main thrust has always been 'Give the patients what they want,'" says O'Connell. "Now we're taking an intrapreneurial hack. We'll ride the winners and get rid of the losers. But we'll always keep something to ride on."

RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS

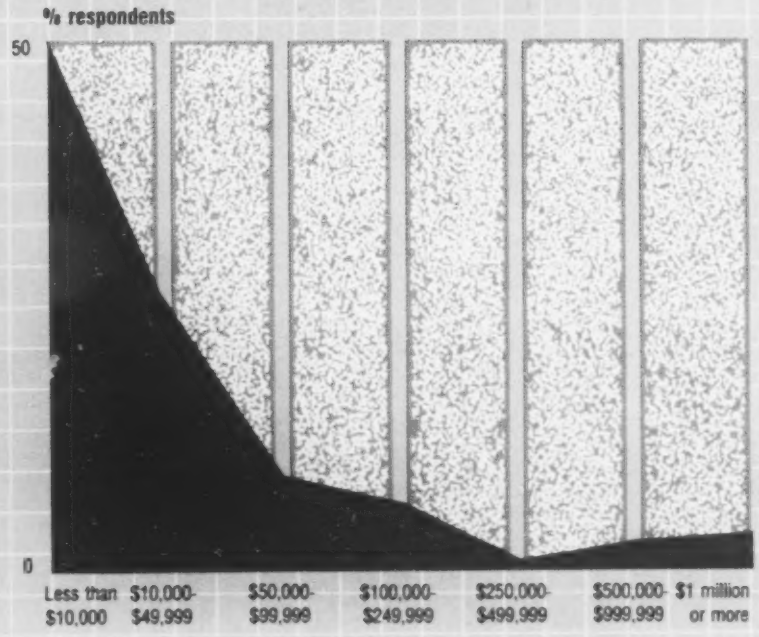
SOWING THE SEEDS

Although it often takes money to make money, the majority of survey respondents launched their revenue-generating ventures for less than $10,000. No institutions used more than $500,000 in start-up capital.



REAPING THE PROFITS

Survey results show that sales aren't necessarily a function of investment capital. Some of the highest grossing ventures were started with less than $50,000. Most respondents, however, averaged $10,000 or less in sales.



POPULAR WAYS TO MAKE MONEY

Although money doesn't grow on trees, it can be cultivated through ingenuity. Here is a breakdown of survey respondents' most popular money-making ventures.

Activity	% respondents
Catering	70
Retail food sales	40
Weight-control programs	30
Consulting	20
Contracting	20
Counseling	10
Cooking classes	7
Other fund-raising events	7
Public restaurants	3
Wholesale food sales	3

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RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS

■ HUMAN RESOURCES

Be Wary of Distractions; Focus on What Guests Say

Be aware of elements that disrupt employee-guest communication.

The following is an excerpt from "The Interpersonal Dimension of Service," an article written by Robert Brymer of Florida State University, Florence Berger of Cornell University and Carol King, president of Qualityservice Group.

Listening is the most important communication skill for restaurant employees. And be attentive to non-verbal cues. Also, be wary of distractions and pressures that interfere with communication.

Numerous elements conspire to hamper service. For example, the sheer noise in a dining room can make miscommunication a likely occurrence.

The pressure to provide speedy service can cause servers to concentrate on the mechanics of rapid delivery and neglect careful listening.

Words have different meanings to different people. Age, education, family background, nationality and personal experience can influence interpretation of a spoken message. Tone of voice and body language further complicate the process. Ask questions if there are any doubts.

The server must attempt to elicit from customers the many details of their dining desires. Menu product knowledge is the server's greatest defense.

Florida State students gain practical service experience through the school's "Little Dinner" series.

Time is also a crucial element of service. Servers should ask guests if they are in a hurry. If so, do not be hasty, but rather take care to understand the guest's order.

Sequencing is important also. Some guests prefer to have menu items brought at the same time, such as coffee or beer with the meal. Ascertaining these preferences and catering to them enhances the dining experience.

■ R&I DATA

LABOR COST INDEX: UNIT MANAGER PAY DROPS OFF IN NORTHEAST

According to January figures, survey respondents from the Northeast, widely known for offering higher starting wages, report newly hired unit managers are averaging lower salaries than managers in other regions of the country.

	Northeast	North Central	Southwest	West	Average commercial	Average institutional
Executive chef*	$28,325	$27,693	$30,482	$27,696	$30,347	$26,853
Manager*	19,834	20,972	21,097	21,450	21,892	19,870
Asst. manager*	18,321	16,392	17,076	18,289	17,609	17,501
Mgmt. trainee*	14,115	13,429	12,356	13,297	13,148	13,389
Cook**	249	212	207	227	216	232
Dishwasher**	166	155	158	153	147	169

Key *annually **weekly

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Brennan's

TRAINING VIDEOS WORK OUT

The video revolution has affected the industry in a positive way at Brennan's in New Orleans. Management has received numerous compliments about improved service since the staff began meeting informally to discuss service. Meetings included a series of videotapes on waitstaff training produced by the National Restaurant Association. Teamwork has evolved and staff attitude has changed 360 degrees because they now have imput about restaurant policies.

■ EQUIPMENT INVESTMENT

Keeping Pace with the Trends

Updated equipment helps deliver the newest in food to foodservice customers.

The foodservice industry always allows room for new ideas, and this year proves no exception. Upscale French restaurants, middle-of-the-road American bistros and country-style inns live comfortably together and even feed the same clientele.

To offer customers a taste of these trends, an operator needs a few basics: a chef able to turn ideas into menus, a well-stocked food supplier and a kitchen filled with versatile equipment.

The equipment decision, perhaps, is the most important because long after the chef opens his own place and the entree of the hour falls by the wayside, the equipment and the investment it symbolizes will still be sitting in the kitchen.

Most operators realize the importance of equipment and buy accordingly. A recently completed *Restaurants & Institutions* study shows that operators rank performance and durability as the most important factors in equipment purchases. Next, in order, come satisfaction with present equipment, price-value relationship, the manufacturer's service network and energy efficiency.

While durability and performance cannot be ignored, many other factors spark the initial decision to buy more equipment. A larger dining room, expanded menu, plans to add an open kitchen or offer banquet service call for new equipment—an opportunity to test the equipment industry's new offerings. Even a simple replacement purchase offers a chance to try a new kind of oven or fryer.

Technological advances as well as simple good ideas have touched the entire kitchen, from cooking to storage. Here is a rundown of ideas and advancements in the major categories of kitchen equipment.

Salad preparation (left) is simplified with sharp, well-maintained knives. Braising pans (right) perform a variety of cooking functions, from grilling to sauteing.

Cooking equipment

During the past few years, the industry has produced equipment capable of streamlining even the most complete kitchens. Combination pieces such as convection oven-steamers, microwave-convection ovens and proofing cabinet-convection ovens take over some duties relegated to convection ovens and pressure or pressureless steamers.

As combination units hit the market, standard multiuse equipment is enjoying new popularity. Tilting skillets find a place in virtually every new full-service kitchen. Their ability to sauté, braise, boil, grill and broil should be taken into consideration if this year's plans include remodeling or replacement. Tilting kettles, too, are as versatile as tilting skillets.

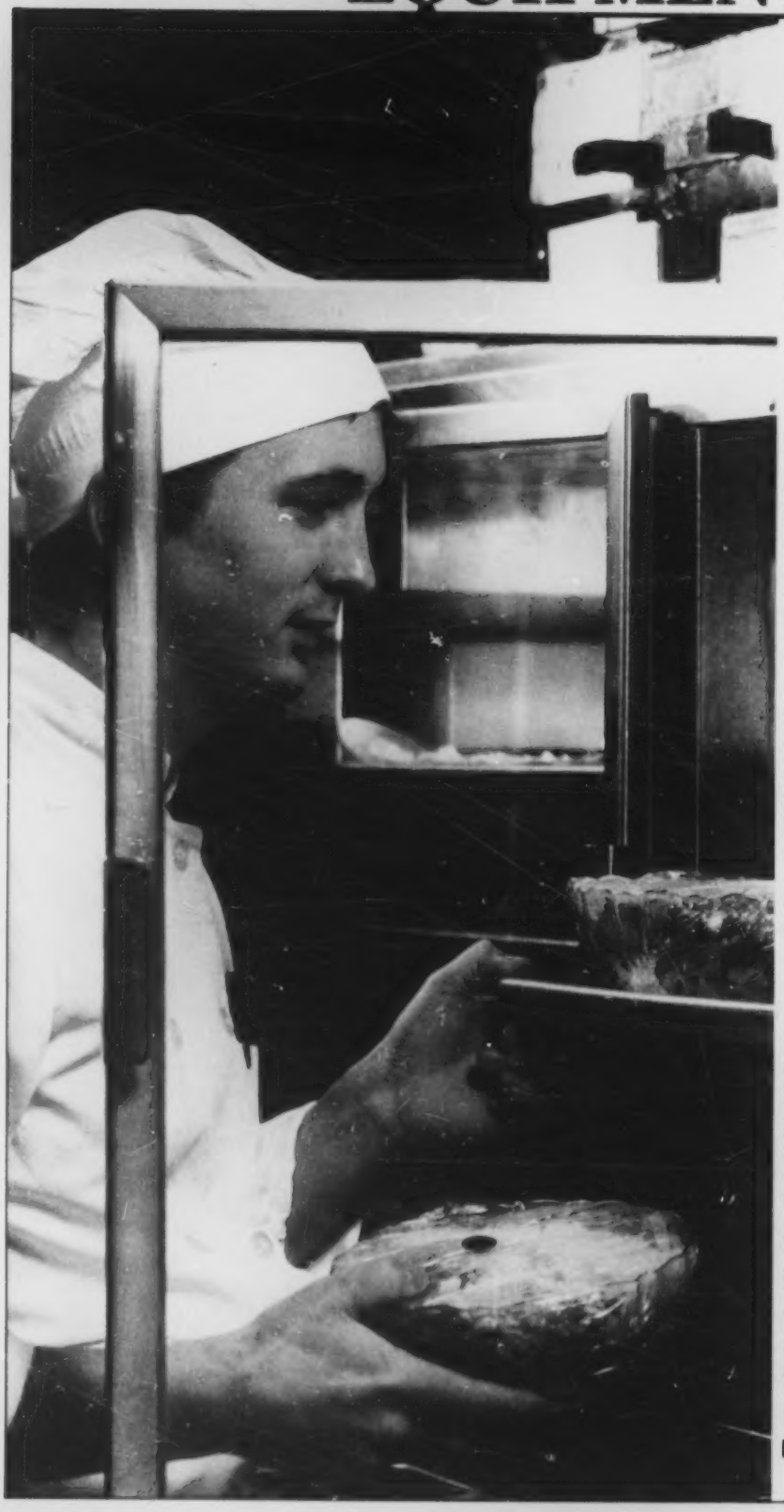
High-efficiency equipment is a source of pride among equipment manufacturers. Fryers, once considered energy hogs, now boast low Btu ratings and high thermal efficiency, resulting in energy savings. Convection-style fryers, better filtering systems and new burner configurations turn out more consistent product.

Energy conservation features, such as thicker insulation and better gaskets on refrigerators and freezers, stand-by modes on electric ice machines and waffle makers and advanced burner technology in ovens trim waste and enhance the equipment's performance.

Easy-to-clean kitchens are fast becoming the industry standard. Removable and replaceable components, sealed and coved edges and simple disassembly ensure safety, sanitation, and cut labor, too.

More and more operators are trying out equipment that always has in-

EQUIPMENT



The average operator will spend $13,242 on equipment this year.

trigued, but never seemed useful. Microwave ovens, for example, are quickly gaining acceptance in all sorts of kitchens, including fine dining. Small, low-wattage models quickly defrost and reheat product in emergencies.

Preparation equipment

The right kind of preparation equipment makes the difference between efficiency and inefficiency.

In small kitchens, for instance, a small slicer can supplement or even replace a manual chopping system. In bigger kitchens, extra mixer attachments speed bulk preparation of fruits and vegetables. The scores of specialty slicers on the market cut shish kebab into even pieces, citrus fruit into "crown" halves and carrots into shreds.

Kitchen knives take a beating, and are built to last, but even they occasionally need replacing. Knives with loose handles, chipped or broken blades and blades sharpened so far that the user's knuckles hit the cutting surface should be replaced.

Can openers fall in the same category as knives and should be considered as important. Old can openers may contaminate food in cans with debris and metal chips. At least one manufacturer claims that its can opener specifically is designed to keep foreign matter from dropping into cans.

Whether to buy a new work table depends largely on space. New or stepped-up menu items, however, may require a make-up table. Sandwich and pizza work tables sport undercounter refrigerators for ingredient storage, drawers for utensils and dropped-in compartments on the top that hold prepped ingredients.

Reach-in countertop refrigerators (left) speed service when filled with prepared menu items.

Serving equipment

The newest serving equipment on the market gives both operators and their customers more options and, above all, merchandises food.

Beverage dispensers, for instance, now dispense three or more different drinks, as well as ice and cold water. Soft-serve machines mix and dispense three or more flavors of ice cream.

Hot and cold food bars help sales as much as they simplify serving. One bar converts from hot to cold with the flip of a switch and the addition of some ice, so it can be used as a hot breakfast bar, a cold lunch salad bar, and a hot food bar at dinner.

Non-convertible units, of course, can be used throughout the day simply by changing the products. For instance, a cold breakfast bar of yogurt, cottage cheese, whipped butter, fresh or canned fruit, granola and quickbreads turns into a salad bar at lunch and dinner with a simple switch of serving crocks.

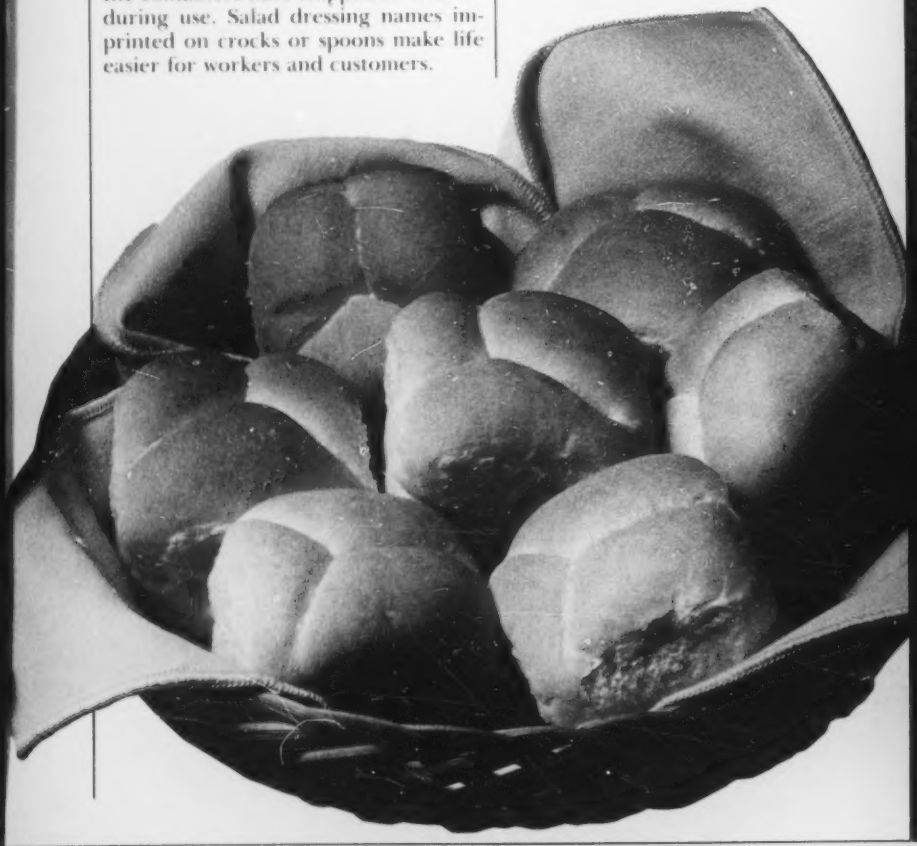
New ingredient crocks and spoons perk up existing salad bars, especially if the containers have chipped or cracked during use. Salad dressing names imprinted on crocks or spoons make life easier for workers and customers.

Display cases and carts take up a lot of the responsibility of food merchandising. Pastries, fresh fruits, salads and takeout offerings look more tempting in sparkling steel and glass refrigerated cases than they do behind closed kitchen doors. Desserts sometimes eclipse their menu description when customers see them displayed on a cart.

Storage and handling

Kitchens never seem to have enough storage space. But small-scale refrigerators and freezers, countertop ice machines, undercounter shelves, mobile

Sometimes, the simple ideas are the best: Rolls nestled in a basket stay warm and look tempting.



TO BUY OR NOT TO BUY?

Operators consider the following factors when they decide whether to buy equipment:

Availability of money	62.2%
Customer counts	49.3
Operation sales	41.8
Unavailability of equipment	12.9
Interest rates	12.0
Economic uncertainty	11.1
New tax laws on depreciation	7.6

Source: Cahners Bureau of Foodservice Research. © 1987 *Restaurants & Institutions*, a Cahners Publication.

EQUIPMENT

Cooking, preparation equipment head 1987 shopping lists.

racks and cabinets free space and ease production.

Refrigerators strategically placed under or atop counters save employee steps. Raw or packaged prepped ingredients for cold salads, appetizers and desserts stored in undercounter refrigerators are easy to reach. And members of the wait staff won't get in the way of the kitchen staff when they pick up items from a pass-through refrigerator.

Mobile refrigerator units equipped with tray slats see more action during banquets than they do during regular hours. Trays of prepared cold food hold well from loading time to serving time. Mobile hot cabinets do the same for hot food.

More shelving holds new orders of pots, pans and extra foodstuffs. Today's foodservice shelves are lighter, easy to assemble, knock down and reconfigure.

Kitchens cannot have too many carts. Stainless-steel or heavy rubber carts haul product around the kitchen, dishes from the table to busing stations, then from busing to ware wash. Carts with wheel brakes double as storage shelving.

Sanitation, warewashing

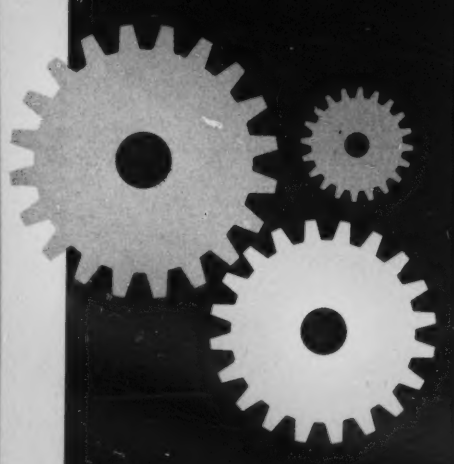
Even dishwashers need replacing. Those that do not need replacing may need companions, if the dining room they serve has expanded.

Large kitchens need long flight-type machines that rinse, wash, sanitize and rinse big loads of dishes. Newer flight types work more quickly and are easier to operate in service. In fact, the service section on a certain new model actually tells the operator what has gone wrong.

Front-loading door-type dishwashers work better in small- to medium-sized kitchens. High-temperature dishwashers, in which the final rinse water reaches 180F, sanitize dishes without a chemically treated final rinse. Since tap water only reaches about 160F, high-temperature washers require booster heaters. Low-temperature washers require a chemical rinse, but no heater.

The only thing standing between the operator and clean dishes may be inadequate dish scraping. When a good scraping with a rubber utensil does not do the trick, a high-power spray nozzle will wash sticky, stubborn soil off dishes.

—Lisa Bertagnoli

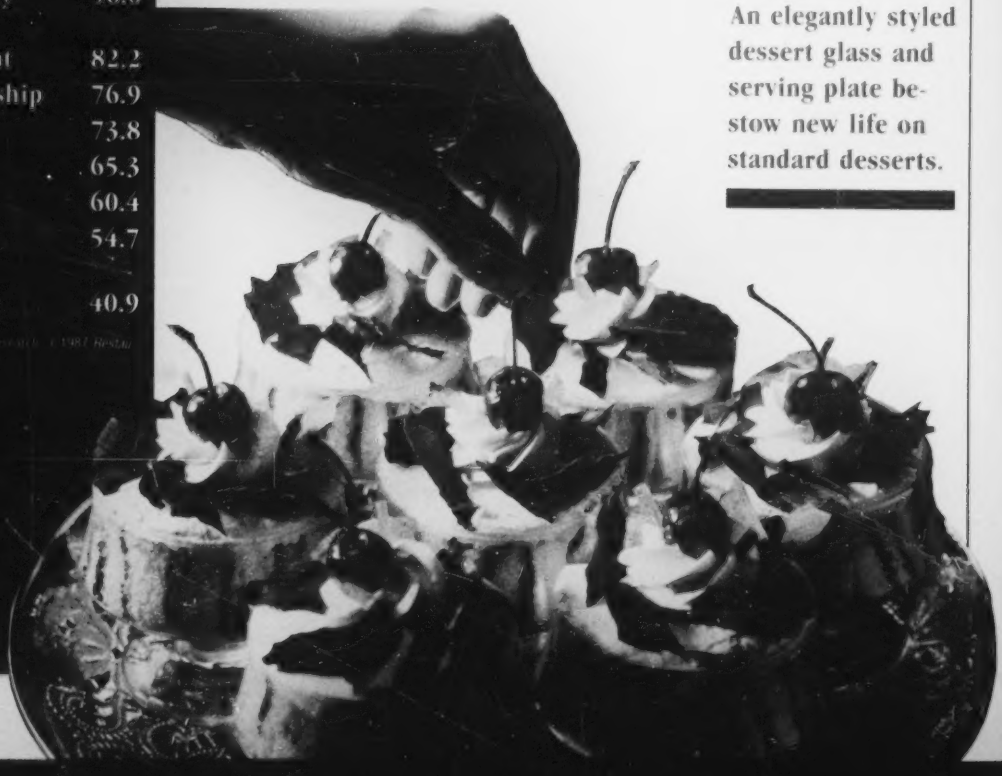


WHAT MATTERS MOST

When operators make the decision to buy, the following factors sway their choice:

Performance	96.9%
Reliability/durability	96.0
Satisfaction with present equipment	82.2
Price-value relationship	76.9
Service network	73.8
Energy efficiency	65.3
Warranty policy	60.4
Delivery/availability	54.7
Other operators' recommendations	40.9

Source: Cahners Books / Equipment Research, 1987 Restaurants & Institutions / Cahners Publishing



An elegantly styled dessert glass and serving plate bestow new life on standard desserts.

ACTION EXPRESS

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RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS, a Cahners publication
1350 E. Touhy Ave., P.O. Box 5080, Des Plaines, IL 60017-5080 Phone: 312/635-8800

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RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS (ISSN 0273-5520) is published biweekly in national, demographic and separate editions by The Cahners Publishing Company, A Division of Reed Publishing USA, 275 Washington St., Newton, MA 02158-1630. William M. Platt, President; Terrence M. McDermott, Executive Vice President; David S. Wexler, Group Vice President; Jerry D. Neth, Vice President/Publishing Operations; J.J. Walsh, Financial Vice President/Magazine Division; Thomas J. Dellamaria, Vice President/Production and Manufacturing. Circulation records are maintained at Cahners Publishing Company, 270 St. Paul St., Denver, CO 80206-5191. Phone: 303/388-4511. Second-class postage paid at Denver, CO 80206-5191 and additional mailing offices. Postmaster: Send form 3579 to our Denver address. RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS copyright 1987 by Reed Publishing USA. Saul Goldweitz, Chairman; Ronald G. Segel, President and Chief Executive Officer; Robert L. Krakoff, Executive Vice President. Annual subscription rates for non-qualified people: USA, $88; Canada/Mexico, $100; other countries, $125 for surface mail and $210 for air mail. Except for special issues where price changes are indicated, single copies of regular issues are available for $6, $8 and $10 (USA, Canada/Mexico and foreign). Please address all subscription mail to RESTAURANTS & INSTITUTIONS, 270 St. Paul St., Denver, CO 80206-5191.